

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

**Listing of Claims:**

Claim 1 (*Canceled*)

1           Claim 2. (*Currently Amended*) ~~[[The]]~~ A network communication system ~~of claim 1~~ in  
2           which a source node sends identical information to a plurality of destination nodes, comprising:  
3           a relay node having a star relay node device for receiving the identical information from  
4           the source node and sending the identical information to the plurality of destination nodes; and  
5           a plurality of predetermined communication paths linking the relay node to the  
6           destination nodes in a star topology centered on the relay node, the identical information being  
7           sent through said predetermined communication paths to the destination nodes,

8           wherein the star relay node device at the relay node includes a virtual address notification  
9           unit for notifying the source node of a virtual address corresponding to said plurality of  
10          destination nodes, and the source node sends the identical information to the plurality of  
11          destination nodes by sending the identical information to the relay node and specifying the  
12          virtual address as a destination address.

1           Claim 3. (*Original*) The network communication system of claim 2, comprising a  
2   plurality of network nodes coupled to the relay node, each network node among said network  
3   nodes having a node device making said network node operable as said source node and, at  
4   different times, to operate as one of said destination nodes.

1           Claim 4. (*Original*) The network communication system of claim 3, wherein the node  
2   device at said network node includes:

3           a request unit for generating a request to send the identical information to the plurality of  
4   destination nodes;

5           a unicast processing unit for sending said request and said identical information to the  
6   relay node;

7           a receiving unit for receiving said identical information and said virtual address; and

8           a virtual address storage unit for storing said virtual address.

1           Claim 5. (*Currently Amended*) ~~[[The]]~~ A network communication system of claim 1 in  
2   which a source node sends identical information to a plurality of destination nodes, comprising:

3           a relay node having a star relay node device for receiving the identical information from  
4   the source node and sending the identical information to the plurality of destination nodes; and

5        a plurality of predetermined communication paths linking the relay node to the  
6        destination nodes in a star topology centered on the relay node, the identical information being  
7        sent through said predetermined communication paths to the destination nodes,

8        wherein the identical information includes a time-to-live parameter, and the star relay  
9        node device includes a time-to-live parameter setting unit for assigning a minimum value to the  
10       time-to-live parameter.

1       Claim 6. (*Currently Amended*) [[The]] A network communication system of claim 1 in  
2       which a source node sends identical information to a plurality of destination nodes, comprising:

3       a relay node having a star relay node device for receiving the identical information from  
4       the source node and sending the identical information to the plurality of destination nodes; and

5       a plurality of predetermined communication paths linking the relay node to the  
6       destination nodes in a star topology centered on the relay node, the identical information being  
7       sent through said predetermined communication paths to the destination nodes,

8       wherein the identical information is accompanied by address information, and each of the  
9       destination nodes has a node device comprising:

10       a filtering unit for comparing the address information accompanying the identical  
11       information with predetermined address information; and

12           a multicast processing unit for receiving the identical information if the accompanying  
13   address information matches the predetermined address, and discarding the identical information  
14   if the accompanying address information fails to match the predetermined address.

Claims 7-14 (*Canceled*)

1           Claim 15. (*Currently Amended*) [[The]] A method of ~~claim 14~~ sending identical  
2   information from a source node to a plurality of destination nodes in a communication network,  
3   wherein the identical information is accompanied by address information, ~~further~~ comprising the  
4   steps of:

5           (a) sending the identical information from the source node to a predetermined relay  
6   node;

7           (b) sending the identical information from the predetermined relay node to the  
8   destination nodes over predetermined communication paths connecting the destination nodes to  
9   the predetermined relay node in a star topology;

10          (c) comparing the address information included in the identical information with  
11   predetermined address information at at least one of the destination nodes;

12          (d) transferring the identical information from said one of the destination nodes to  
13   equipment connected to said one of the destination nodes by a communication path, if the

14 address information accompanying the identical information matches the predetermined address  
15 information; and  
16 (e) discarding the identical information at said one of the destination nodes if the  
17 address information accompanying the identical information fails to match the predetermined  
18 address information.

1 Claim 16. (*Currently Amended*) [[The]] A method of claim 11, further comprising the  
2 step of sending identical information from a source node to a plurality of destination nodes in a  
3 communication network, comprising the steps of:  
4 (a) sending the identical information from the source node to a predetermined relay  
5 node;  
6 (b) sending the identical information from the predetermined relay node to the  
7 destination nodes over predetermined communication paths connecting the destination nodes to  
8 the predetermined relay node in a star topology; and  
9 (c) setting a time to live of the identical information to a minimum value at the relay  
10 node.

Claims 17-18 (*Canceled*)